

Giant Hogweed

Pest Survey

Information Sheet

THREAT: Giant hogweed- *Heracleum mantegazzianum*, is a tall herbaceous biennial plant native to the Caucasus Mountains of Asia. It was introduced to North America in the early 1900's as a unique specimen for ornamental gardens. Giant hogweed is considered a public health threat to humans and the environment. When skin comes in contact with the plants clear water sap and then exposed to sunlight the toxins (glucoside) produce severe skin irritations, burns, and large watery blisters, which can result in permanent scarring. In the natural environment, these plants have become escapees from the landscapes where they were originally planted and becoming problematic in riparian areas, outcompeting native vegetation and causing negative impacts to wildlife.

DESCRIPTION: Giant hogweed can reach a height of 10 to 15 feet. Its robust, hollow stems are 2 to 4 inches in diameter and are covered with coarse, white hairs and purple blotches. Its leaves are deeply lobed and compound, which can reach 5 feet across. In May through July large clusters of white inflorescence type flowers form reaching a diameter from 2 to 3 feet. In North America it has been found naturalized in riparian habitats, wetlands, roadside ditches and lake shores.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS: Large, tuberous roots, rapid growth and abundant seed production make giant hogweed difficult to control. Small numbers of plants can be hand-dug. If hand-digging, protective clothing should be worn to avoid contact with the sap. Immediate washing of the skin should be done if contact does occur. Not everyone experiences skin irritation. Repeated mowing during the season weakens plants, but the tuberous roots can remain alive for many years. It is important to recognize giant hogweed and not spread it through garden use or by collecting and drying the flower heads.



Mature Giant Hogweed growing wild along a New Hampshire roadway



Flowers of Giant Hogweed are whitish and are formed in umbels that can reach 1' across



Seeds are 3/8" long, flattish and have 2-4 brownish stripes



Stalks are 2' in diameter, purplish green, and covered with hairs



Purplish green stems support 1.5-2' long dentate leaves



Giant Hogweed is aggressive and readily becomes established